

## Snapshot of the “Protector” Role

- Do not assume. Always assess what the preceptee knows, how they know it and what they need to know.
- Reinforce previous learning. Ensure safe clinical practice, but gradually increase the responsibility for preceptees.
- Ask a lot of questions. Confirm the preceptees’ understanding of a situation. Fill in the blanks with further discussion.
- Explain things as you go. Explain your actions, behaviors and perspectives of clinical situations.
- Supervise and verify. Ensure competency in preceptees’ actions, behaviors, decisions and patient care.
- Communicate. Create a culture of open and honest communication.

## The Preceptor’s Role As “Protector”

As preceptors, we serve in multiple roles as we strive to meet the needs of our preceptees. Preceptors function as evaluators, role models, educators, socializers and protectors. The protector role has important implications for everyone in the clinical environment because it focuses not only on patient safety but also on the establishment of a safe environment for patients, hospital staff, families and visitors. Keeping patients free from harm is the mission of a safe health care environment and is a core value of the nursing profession. In addition, preventing bullying among staff and forming a safe and supportive learning environment for preceptees is another area in which preceptors operate as protectors.

No matter what their level of experience, preceptees require support during their orientation, although the level of support required will probably differ between preceptees. Preceptees need an environment where they feel secure about practicing their nursing skills in a place they can learn, grow, mature and acquire professional competence (Ohrling & Hallberg, 2000).

Preceptors should develop the preceptee experience with the goal of creating a protective safe environment that optimizes learning. Establishing an atmosphere of trust, honesty and cooperation with clearly communicated expectations and rewards and recognition is very important. A safe learning environment is a strong foundation for the preceptees’ participation in a culture of safety that is focused on quality patient care.

### References:

Ohrling, K. & Hallberg, I. R. (2000). Student nurses’ lived experience of preceptorship. Part 2 – the preceptor – preceptee relationship. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 37(1), 25-36.